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concavity for placement adjacent a fastener, wherein said spoke is defined by said sealing material disposed at the intersection between two linear portions of said partially rectilinear periphery.

REMARKS

In the following remarks, except where indicated, the claims are referenced in accordance with their numbering as previously filed and evaluated in the Written Opinion.

The Written Opinion states that claims 1-4, 10, 11, 20, 28, 31 and 33-35 lack novelty and inventive step under PCT Articles 33(2) and 33(3) because Merwarth, U.S. Patent No. RE 11,858 ("Merwarth") teaches each and every claimed feature.

Merwarth proposes a gasket for use between pipe-flanges having an inner ring A, an outer ring B, and centering eyes C, the inner ring being preferably formed of larger wire than the outer ring B, the outer ring being composed of a harder metal than the inner ring, the rings A and B being secured together. The eyes are engaged by bolts which are used to secure the pipe-flanges together and are apparently substantially circular.

Twice Amended claim 1 includes the novel and inventive step feature of a spoke having a concavity. Merwarth cannot provide for this feature, which allows the gasket to be installed after installation of the fasteners. Twice Amended claim 3 includes the novel and inventive step feature of a spoke having a curved aperture which is radially elongate. Merwarth is incapable of providing this feature, since the diameter of the eyes C must remain close to the diameter of the bolts passing therethrough in order to acceptably maintain the disposition of the gasket.

The dependent claims add additional subject matter for providing additional patentable distinctions over Merwarth.

The Opinion states that claims 22, 23, 25, 28 31 and 33-35 all lack novelty and

inventive step under PCT Articles 33(2) and 33(3) because Dutton, U.S. Patent No. 4,269,417 ("Dutton"), allegedly teaches each and every claimed feature.

Twice Amended claim 21, corresponding to Amended claim 22, includes the novel and inventive step feature of a notch formed in the outer periphery of a strip of resilient sealing material, the notch being adapted for receiving a thickness gauge for measuring a change in the thickness of the sealing strip when the flanges are drawn together and the sealing material compresses. In contradistinction, Dutton proposes a seal gland having slots 16 and 18 to receive bolts. The seal gland is disclosed as a rigid casting and does not significantly compress. Therefore, measuring its compression to indicate the tightness of the coupling would not be practical and is not suggested by the reference.

The dependent claims include additional subject matter providing for additional patentable distinctions.

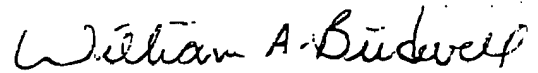
The Opinion states that claim 22 lacks novelty and inventive step under PCT Articles 33(2) and 33(3) because FR 1,125,110 ("French reference") teaches each and every claimed feature.

The aforementioned novel and inventive step feature of Twice Amended claim 21, corresponding to Amended claim 22, is a novel and inventive step feature with respect to the French reference as well, as the void areas illustrated are spheroidal and, hence, are particularly ill-adapted for receiving a thickness gauge. Moreover, it is also illustrated that access to the void areas is not permitted when the sealing device is installed.

The dependent claims include additional subject matter providing for additional patentable distinctions.

The Opinion states that claim 26 is not clear. Apparently, the Opinion refers to claim 27. Applicant has amended claim 27 to clarify the subject matter thereof.

Respectfully submitted,



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